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BATMAN AND SUPERMAN

**GREAT
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INSIDE!**



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TM IN

SMALLTOWN BOY

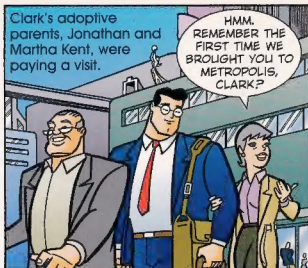
Metropolis, and a sight that never fails to evoke wonder and awe—**Superman!**



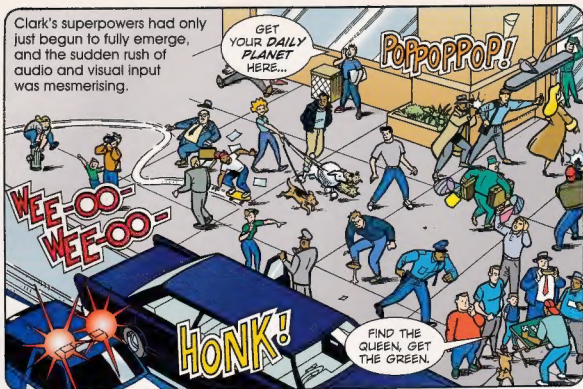
But even the Man of Steel, with his extraordinary powers and abilities, can be—

WHOOOOOOOSH!!

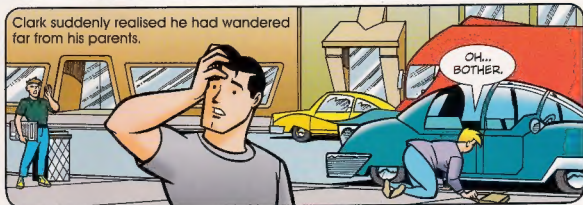




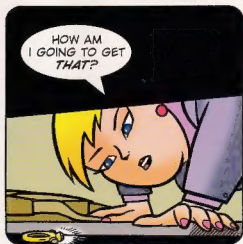
Clark's superpowers had only just begun to fully emerge, and the sudden rush of audio and visual input was mesmerising.



Clark suddenly realised he had wandered far from his parents.



HOW AM I GOING TO GET THAT?



MA'AM.

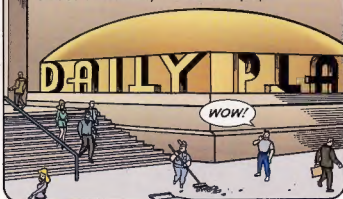
WHY, THANK YOU.



Before the woman realised what had happened, Clark managed to get out of sight.



Clark's meandering route took him past one of Metropolis's most famous buildings—the offices of the *Daily Planet* newspaper.



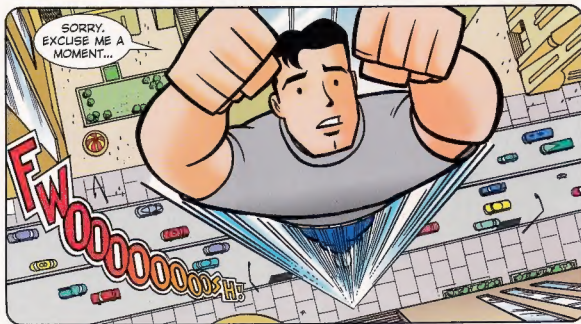
HARD JOB
BEING A NEWS
REPORTER...
USED TO BE ONE
MYSELF...

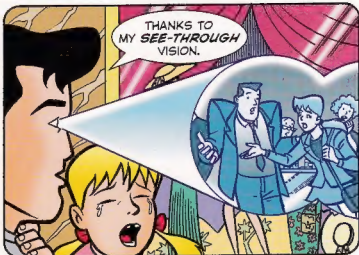
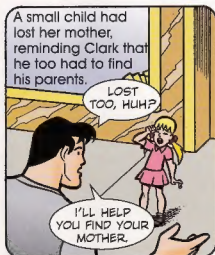
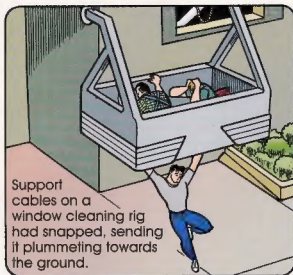


Clark's superhearing had picked up a sound from above.



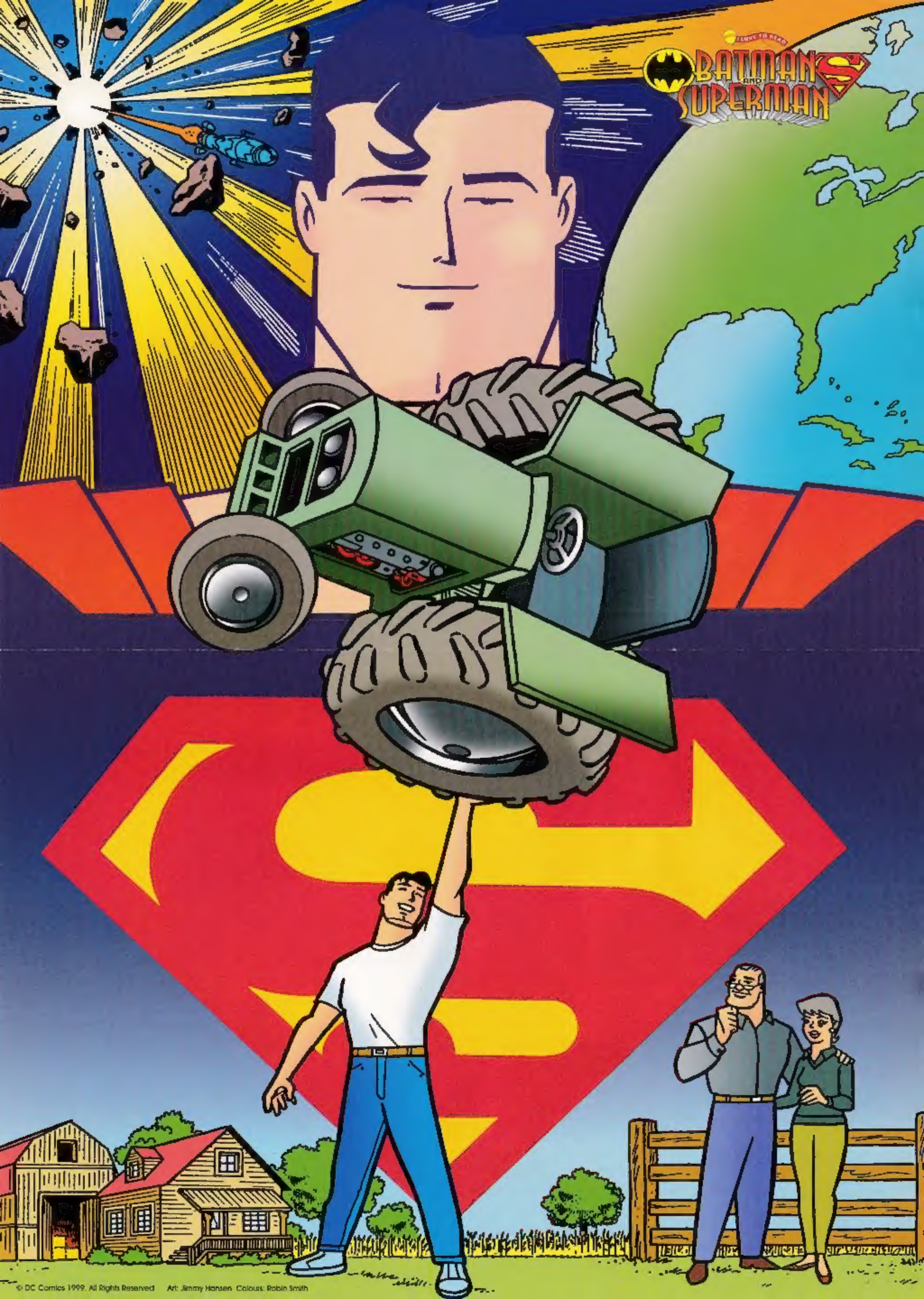
SORRY.
EXCUSE ME A
MOMENT...







THE END?



A society party turns into a case of...

TEA AND HOSTILITY



chap, but a good bloodline. Related to the British Royal Family, you know."

A squat, vaguely comical figure turned as they approached and extended a hand. "Bruce," Whitman said, "I want you to meet Oswald Chesterfield Cobblepot." Bruce's practised smile fell. It was the Penguin!

Bruce Wayne weaved his way through the throng of guests at a high society party, his bland smile rigidly in place. In order to fight crime effectively as Batman, he also had to let Bruce Wayne be seen out and about occasionally, maintaining the billionaire playboy illusion.

The event, an excuse for Gotham's rich and famous to compare bank balances, had begun to grate on Bruce's nerves. He was making for the door when the host, an industrialist named Rupert Whitman, cornered him.

"Someone I want you to meet," he boomed, steering Bruce by the elbow towards a small knot of guests. "Strange

Of course, the Penguin's true identity was no secret, which made his presence at the party all the more baffling. Bruce's mind whirled, but nevertheless he extended a hand and greeted Cobblepot.

Moving off, Bruce noticed Cobblepot scanning the walls of the drawing room in which they were gathered. He seemed to be taking particular interest in Whitman's collection of valuable paintings. Was that the Penguin's game? Was he planning to steal them?

Or maybe it was the guests themselves? There was a vast amount of jewellery on display, dangling from ears and draped around necks.

Whatever the case, until the Penguin made his move, Bruce's hands were tied. The arch-villain wasn't actually wanted for any crime at present, having served all his prison time. Bruce could only watch...and wait.

Across the room, Cobblepot smiled contentedly. In fact, crime was the last thing on his mind. He was too busy soaking up the atmosphere. Around him stood Gotham's elite, and he, Oswald Chesterfield Cobblepot, was one of them.

All his life he'd wanted to be accepted by Gotham's gentry and treated as their equal. Now, his dream had become a reality, and even though he had to forge a family tree to do it, he was finally where he felt he truly belonged.

In a nearby private study, Whitman and several of his closest friends were seated in leather chairs, enjoying brandy and cigars. The subject currently under discussion was Oswald Chesterfield Cobblepot.

"Goodness, Whitman," blurted a thin man whose father had made a fortune in oil, "where did you find him?" Around the room, Whitman and several other men, all similarly well-to-do, chuckled.

"I mean," continued the thin man, "the chap may well take tea with the Queen on a regular basis, but he probably stirs it with his nose!"

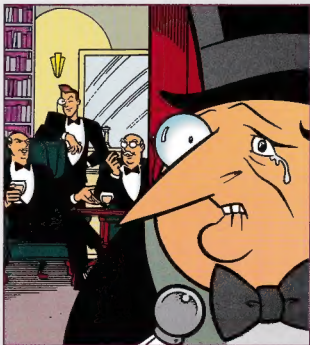
The room filled with drifting smoke

and mocking laughter. A red-faced man, the buttons of his waistcoat straining at the pressure of too many gourmet meals, wagged a finger in mock disapproval.

"Really, Chalfont," he said to the thin man, "don't speak ill of Whitman's guest. After all, normally, we have to *pay* for the entertainment."

Harsh, braying laughter echoed from the room, into the small corridor beyond. Cobblepot, his hand resting on the part-opened study door, listened as his manners, breeding and general appearance were ridiculed by those within.

Tears formed in Cobblepot's eyes and ran down his cheeks. He wiped them away, dismissing them as a reaction to the thick smoke drifting from inside the room. When the Penguin turned away, his mouth was set in a thin, bitter scowl.



Back in the drawing room, Bruce Wayne was worried. He had lost track of Cobblepot when he'd been cornered by a once-famous actress who seemed intent on telling him all about her recent plastic surgery.

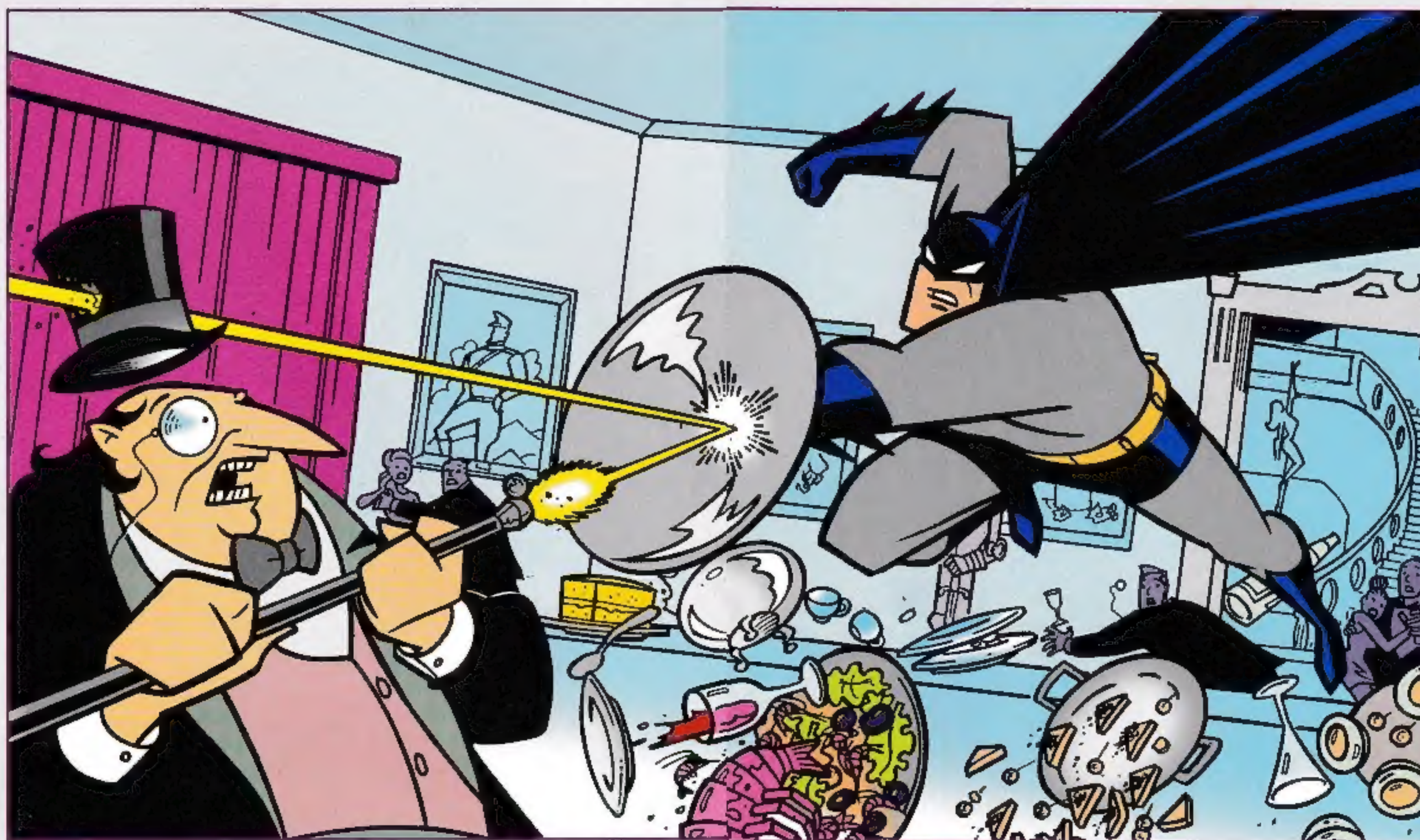
The sudden harsh crack of an energy discharge from outside the drawing room stopped all conversation. Moments later, a pale-faced Whitman entered followed by the men who'd been with him in his study. No one was laughing now.

The Penguin, the tip of his cane smoking, was right behind them. The once-famous actress, eyes wide with fright, turned to Bruce Wayne. But he was gone.

"What is the meaning of this?" demanded a burly newspaper mogul. "What do you think you're doing—"

SHRAK! The air sizzled as a laser beam lanced from the tip of the Penguin's cane, exploding a rather expensive porcelain vase perched atop a Roman-style column. "Whatever I want," hissed the Penguin. "Whatever I want."

The crowd parted as the Penguin hustled forwards, sweeping the deadly cane before him. "You people," he said, sighting his cane and turning in a circle so that each guest stared down its barrel, their eyes wide with terror. "Did you really believe I wanted to be a part of this stuffy old boy's club? Do you



think for a moment I care about your pedigrees and bloodlines?"

"The truth is, you're bloated and smug," continued the Penguin, "stuffed with the fruit of other people's hard work. Well...I came here to help you shed some pounds."

With that, the Penguin quickly snagged a gold necklace with the tip of his cane, flipping it up and over the head of its startled owner. He caught it in the same motion. "There," he said to the woman, "don't you feel better for that? Now, the rest of you... cash, cards, jewellery. All of it!"

As trembling hands reached for wallets and other valuables, across the room one rock steady hand raised a crescent shaped object—and threw.

The Penguin caught the slight motion from the corner of his eye, turned and fired. The Batarang disintegrated in mid-flight.

"Welcome to the party, Batman," snarled the Penguin, unfazed by the Dark Knight's sudden appearance. "Do you dance?"

With that he peppered the back of the room with blasts from his cane, forcing Batman to leap, roll and finally dive for cover behind the long dining table on which the buffet had been laid.

The Penguin advanced, cane at the ready. There was a movement behind the table and he fired. Batman timed his move perfectly, springing up with an enormous silver serving platter shielding him. The laser beam was reflected off its

surface, straight back at the Penguin.

The Penguin avoided the blast—just in time—the laser beam drilling a neat hole through his top hat. Before he could respond, Batman was on him. A flying leap from the table sent them both crashing to the floor.

Somehow the Penguin managed to hold onto his cane, firing wildly. A chance shot lanced upwards, neatly severing the metal cable supporting a huge chandelier. Batman and the Penguin froze in mid-struggle, looking up to see the mass of crystal and metal falling towards them.

Seizing the Penguin, Batman threw him clear, then rolled again and again, the chandelier missing him by millimetres as it hit the floor in an explosion of shattered glass.

Winded, and with his cane pinned under the wreckage of the chandelier, the Penguin offered little resistance as Batman hauled him to his feet. "I think," said Batman, surveying the wrecked room, "you've overstayed your welcome."

But, as he was led away, the Penguin allowed himself another strangely smug, satisfied smile. He had seen the guests' fear during the hold-up, and knew that where Oswald Chesterfield Cobblepot had failed to earn their respect... the Penguin had succeeded.

THE END